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# Political and Personality Handbook of Iraq [REDACTED]

*A Research Paper*



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## Political and Personality Handbook of Iraq

### Summary

*Information available  
as of 31 December 1990  
was used in this report.*

Iraq's civilization is among the world's oldest. Modern Iraqis, particularly President Saddam Husayn, are proud of their heritage and strongly wish to be viewed as cultural equals by the West. Saddam carries this one step further with his vision of a strong Iraq leading a reconstituted Pan-Arab world to political and economic parity with the West.

To make his vision a reality, Saddam has built a powerful, centralized political machine with only himself and a few trusted family members and lieutenants making virtually all policy decisions. Over the past decade, he has systematically and effectively undermined what collegial decisionmaking authority there was in the Ba'th Party while increasing his own power. He has used an extensive network of security services—widely known for their brutality—to create a self-policing society and to maintain his hold over Iraq.

Saddam's eight-year war with Iran established Iraq's military superiority over its ancient rival, made Iraq the dominant Arab military power, provided impetus for pacifying troublesome ethnic minorities like the Kurds, and served as a rallying point for Iraqi nationalism. In the process, the war helped strengthen Saddam's claim to a leading role in the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israel dispute.

The invasion of Kuwait also plays a central role in Saddam's quest for regional leadership. His primary goals include gaining more secure access to the sea—a longstanding Iraqi national ambition—improving Iraq's dismal financial situation, playing the leading part in the formulation of Arab oil policy, and asserting his role as the only Arab leader who can oppose perceived Western and Israeli hegemonic intentions.

Saddam makes all key decisions in Iraq; he appears to have been a solitary decisionmaker most of his life. His experience in surviving 40 years of Iraq's cutthroat political arena has sharpened his self-reliance and his suspicions of others. Virtually all of his political lieutenants share and reinforce his parochial, anti-Western views and ruthlessly enforce his edicts.

Saddam makes most military decisions on the basis of his intuition. Recently, however, he has begun appointing competent, battle-tested men to such key positions as Minister of Defense and Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff. We judge that these appointments reflect Saddam's desire to improve the combat effectiveness of Iraq's military forces in the event war breaks out, rather than because of dissension among senior military officers over the invasion of Kuwait, as was rumored in November-December 1990. [REDACTED]


Even if Saddam survives the Persian Gulf crisis with his regime and military intact, Iraq still faces the long-term challenge of promoting national unity among many disparate ethnic, religious, and political groups. To do so, Saddam will continue—as he always has—to play on Iraqi nationalism, enhance his government's religious credentials, extol the nation's glorious past, and increase military and technological capability—particularly by developing a nuclear weapon. [REDACTED]

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Scope Note

This Research Paper provides basic information on Iraq's political culture, institutions, [REDACTED] It complements several other recently published or soon-to-be-published papers [REDACTED]



## Political and Personality Handbook of Iraq

### Historical Backdrop

Iraq has a rich cultural heritage—both pre-Islamic and Islamic—and has been a major center of power in the Middle East since ancient times. Its strategic location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa has contributed to its ethnic and religious diversity and its traditionally unstable politics. Iraq's history is characterized by the rise and fall of powerful empires, a wide array of cultural accomplishments, and several extended periods of foreign domination.

Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia) is the birthplace of Near Eastern civilization. Archeological remains at sites in northern Iraq indicate that both agriculture and domestication of animals originated in Iraq in the middle of the seventh millennium B.C. The Sumerian civilization, which blossomed during the fourth millennium, had numerous industrial and cultural achievements, including development of a sophisticated irrigation system, invention of the chariot, casting of bronze, use of advanced mathematics, and creation of an accurate lunar calendar. Most important, the Sumerians invented writing—pictographs that eventually evolved into the more abstract cuneiform system of lines and wedges. Subsequent Mesopotamian empires inherited these advancements, as well as highly developed Sumerian religious and legal systems and a rich literary tradition.

Sargon of Akkad—sometimes considered one of Saddam Husayn's role models—ushered in the Akkadian Empire in 2350 B.C. by conquering the Sumerian city-states and uniting the areas of central and southern Iraq. The Akkadians' ascendancy placed the Semites over the non-Semitic Sumerians. The problems that eventually brought down the empire in the second millennium B.C. have plagued ancient and modern Iraqi regimes alike: rapid expansion coupled with incomplete assimilation of ethnically and linguistically diverse conquered peoples, internal rebellions and coup attempts, incursions by northern highlanders, and inadequate natural defenses of the empire's frontiers.

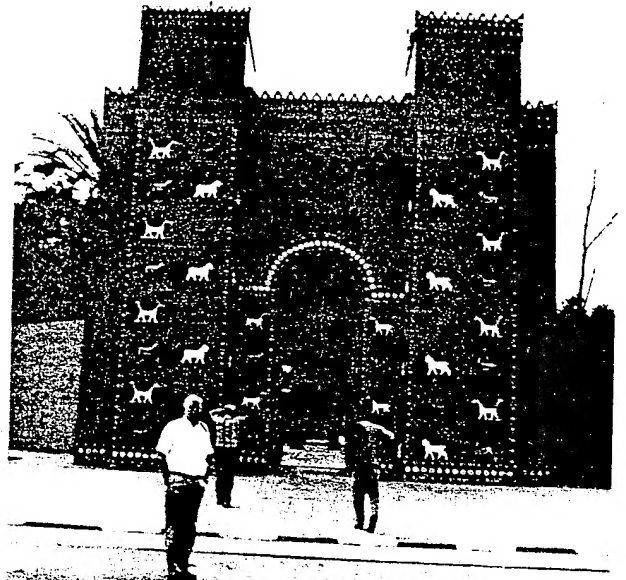


Figure 1. Gates of ancient Babylon

The Akkadians were succeeded by the Babylonian (1900-1595 B.C.), Assyrian (911-605 B.C.), and Neo-Babylonian (605-539 B.C.) empires and periods of foreign domination by the Kassites, Arameans, Hittites, and Elamites. The Babylonian dynasties produced other role models for Saddam: leaders such as Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.), the famous lawgiver and Nebuchadnezzar I (1124-1103 B.C.), ruthless conqueror of Syria and Palestine. The Assyrians, known for the brutality of their conquests, had a highly efficient, centralized administration and large provincial bureaucracy.

Another period of foreign domination began when the Persians, led by Cyrus, conquered Babylon in 539 B.C. They controlled the area until they were conquered in 331 B.C. by Alexander the Great. The Parthians swept out of the steppes of Turkestan and

wrested control of the area from the Greek Seleucids in 126 B.C. A large influx of newcomers—mostly Arabs, Arameans, and Persians—and centuries of political and economic decline during the Parthian and Sassanid Persian (224-651 A.D.) periods brought Iraq's once glorious ancient culture to an end and prepared the way for the Islamic era. ■

The Arab-Islamic conquest that began in the seventh century virtually obliterated the remnants of earlier Mesopotamian cultures. The Islamic conquest of Iraq was accomplished in 637, when invading Arab tribes defeated a much larger Persian force at Qadisiyyah, a battle still revered in Iraqi history and extolled by Saddam as the equivalent of Waterloo or Gettysburg. ■

The Abbasid dynasty emerged in 750 and brought stability and prosperity to Arab Iraq. Baghdad was founded in 762 and was perhaps the world's greatest center of culture in the ninth century. As in ancient times, the empire's agricultural richness and geographical location on the crossroads of important trade routes contributed to extensive economic development. By the 10th century, Baghdad's trade relations reached from southeastern Europe to China. ■

A slow decline began in the ninth century. Political instability, increasing dependence on foreign bureaucrats and mercenaries, increasing urbanization, and a steady decline in agriculture and irrigation maintenance all contributed to the deterioration. The process was accelerated by the Mongol invasions that began in the early 13th century and culminated with the sacking of Baghdad in 1258. ■

Four centuries of chaos followed until the Ottoman Turks succeeded in 1639 in wresting control of Iraq from the Persian Safavid dynasty and held it until the end of World War I. Ottoman government, law, and culture had a lasting effect on the country and played a significant role in determining the political and social ethos of modern Iraq. A weakening of Ottoman central government in the 17th century, however, began another long period of neglect, economic decay, official corruption, and local autonomy. ■

Two years after the defeat of the Ottoman Turks in 1918, the San Remo Conference assigned Britain a mandate over Iraq. The British quickly swept away the remnants of Ottoman government and installed a new administration and civil and criminal codes based on Britain's imperial structure. In 1921 the British began a policy of indirect rule by installing a monarchy under King Faysal ibn Hussein of the Meccan Hashemite Dynasty (and great uncle of Jordan's King Hussein I). ■

The end of the mandate in 1932 and the subsequent withdrawal of direct British rule ushered in a period of instability that persisted throughout the reigns of Faysal's successors, Ghazi and Faysal II. The regime was plagued by growing nationalist opposition, ethnic and religious unrest, a series of tribal revolts, and coup attempts. Throughout this period British political and economic influence in Iraq remained strong. The British retained the controlling interest in the Iraq Petroleum Company, and, when pro-German officers led by Rashid 'Ali staged a nationalist coup in 1940/41, the British invaded and reinstalled the pro-British ruling group. This political environment shaped the outlook of Saddam's stepfather (who is also his maternal uncle) Khayrallah Talfah—who raised Saddam after the young boy's father, Husayn al-Majid, died. ■

A military-led revolution in 1958, headed by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim, overthrew the British-supported monarchy and eradicated the vestiges of colonial occupation. The coup ended Britain's influence, virtually eliminated the Iraqi upper-class old guard from politics, and inaugurated the domination of Iraq by a radical nationalist officer corps drawn primarily from the lower middle class. Soon after the revolt the unity of the revolutionary government eroded, and Qasim faced repeated challenges from Arab nationalists. Qasim was overthrown and killed in February 1963 by a coalition of moderate nationalist officers and members of the Pan-Arab Ba'th Party. An attempt by the Ba'thists to outmaneuver their military allies failed, and in November 1963 Gen. 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif took control. ■

Nationalist military officers held power until 1968, when they were ousted by the Ba'thists, who espoused a more radical form of Arab nationalism and socialism. The Ba'thists have presided over the most politically stable period in the country's modern history. The civilian-led Ba'th Party of Iraq launched an era of major social, economic, and political change. During its 22 years of rule, the Ba'th leadership has imposed a repressive government and secular national institutions on a poor, tradition-minded, heterogeneous population. [REDACTED]

### Saddam's Iraq

During the late 1970s, Saddam Husayn, then Vice Chairman of the ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), gradually forced President Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr to yield power; he formally replaced him as President in July 1979. Upon assuming the presidency, he purged the RCC of those he distrusted, executing some of them for alleged pro-Syrian activities. He also conducted widespread purges of middle-level Ba'thist officials. He carried out a second major purge of the RCC in 1982 and began replacing party hacks with technocrats in ministerial posts. Saddam has consistently and ruthlessly suppressed political opponents and dissidents and has increased his own power—and that of his fellow Tikriti clansmen—at the expense of the Ba'th Party and the RCC. He also has overcome significant threats to internal stability from Shi'a and Kurdish opposition and faces no internal political constraints on his ambitions. [REDACTED]

During eight of Saddam's first 11 years as President, the country was locked in a full-scale war against Iran. Iraq—after months of aiding Iranian exiles and dissidents, attacking Iranian diplomats and facilities, and numerous border incidents—invaded Iran in September 1980 in the hope of precipitating the overthrow of the Khomeini regime. The conflict (the most destructive in modern Middle East history) exacted a tremendous human and economic toll. We estimate that Iraq suffered 382,000 military casualties—127,000 dead and 255,000 wounded; 2.3 percent of the total population—or the equivalent of 5.6 million in a population the size of the United States. The war ended in July 1988, when Iran's leader, Ayatollah

Ruhollah Khomeini, accepted UN Security Council Resolution 598. Iraq failed to achieve its goals, and the conflict virtually wiped out Iraq's foreign assets—which had been \$36 billion in 1980—and left the country \$45 billion in debt to non-Arab governments and banks. Shortly after the invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, Saddam suddenly relinquished virtually all of Iraq's political and territorial gains in order to secure his eastern flank while he directed his attention southward. [REDACTED]

Iraq emerged from the war with the most formidable military force in the Arab world and determined—as its brutal takeover of Kuwait illustrates—to dominate the Arab world. Despite a worldwide embargo against Baghdad and its nearly total isolation in the world community as a result of its aggression, Saddam remains firmly in control. He views himself as the rightful leader of the Arab world and hopes that Iraq's size, location, abundant oil reserves, and military and industrial strength can be used to reconstitute a great Pan-Arab nation that one day will achieve political and economic parity with the West. [REDACTED]

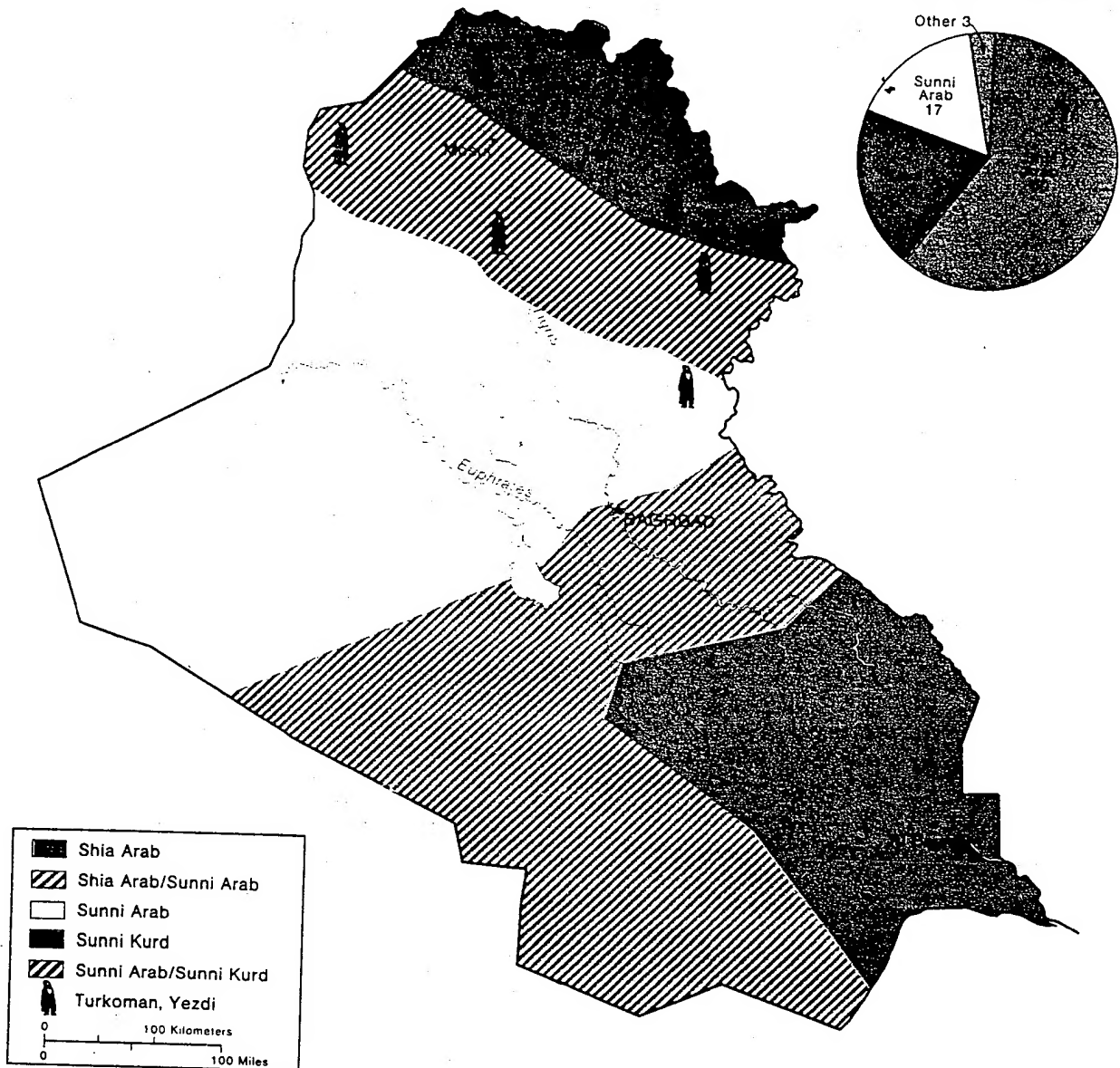
If Saddam extricates himself from the Persian Gulf crisis with his power intact, he faces formidable domestic challenges. He is certain to encounter deep public anger over the devastating economic and political effects of the crisis and resentment within the military for relinquishing the few gains of the war with Iran. He must also forge a national identity from the country's disparate and disenfranchised ethnic groups and control popular resentment over his repressive rule and the lack of political reform. [REDACTED]

### Social Structure and National Identity

The development of stable, national political and social structures has been hampered by the country's divergent religious, ethnic, and class groups. With different backgrounds, they have deep-seated suspicions of each other and longstanding resentments. The majority Shi'a (schismatic) Arabs have always been dominated by the Sunni (orthodox) Arabs, who, although a minority, control the government, armed



# Iraq: Ethnic and Religious Groups



## *The Changing Status of Women in Iraqi Society*

*In general, the status of women in Iraq has advanced further than that of women in most other Arab nations. The position of Iraqi women has changed slowly but steadily under the Ba'th Party, whose doctrine calls for the liberation of women and their full integration into all areas of society. The government has adopted laws that encourage the education and employment of females. It sponsors child care centers, provides liberal, paid maternity leave, has outlawed sexual discrimination in government agencies, and has legislated equal pay for equal work. To strengthen the position of women in the nuclear and extended family, the government passed legislation in 1978 curtailing arranged and forced marriages, subjecting polygamy to greater judicial scrutiny, and strengthening women's rights in divorce cases.*

*Iraq's educational reform program, which was begun in 1974, has improved literacy among women and, together with the Iran-Iraq war, catapulted them into critical roles in the labor force. Both the number of women and the diversity of work they perform has increased dramatically. According to a contractor study, from 1975 to 1988, participation of women in the labor force nearly doubled from 12 percent to 23 percent. Many women, especially those in agriculture and family-owned enterprises, received no remuneration in 1975. By 1988 most women were in wage-earning jobs. Forty-six percent of women are teachers—22 percent at the university level and 57 percent in teacher-training schools. Twenty-nine percent of*

*doctors, 46 percent of dentists, 70 percent of pharmacists, 21 percent of civil servants, and 30 percent of construction supervisors are women. Of those elected to the country's 250-seat National Assembly in 1989, about 13 percent were women. In contrast, women comprise only 4 percent (2 of 50) of the Kurdish Legislative Council (parliament of the Kurdish Autonomous Region) elected in 1989.*

*Women's issues in Iraq are championed by the General Federation of Iraqi Women, an organ of the Ba'th Party that boasts a membership of 850,000 members. The federation provides child care and literacy and job training. Federation volunteers help organize training in health and child care for mothers and professionals aimed at reducing infant mortality, improving postnatal care, and implementing Baghdad's aggressive immunization program.*

*Notwithstanding the steady progress of Iraqi women toward equality, Islamic-based laws and tribal and family traditions, especially within the more conservative Shi'a and Kurdish communities, still relegate them to a secondary status in society. In addition, women are also likely to face greater job competition and, possibly, discrimination if Iraq eventually begins large-scale demobilization of its nearly 1-million-member armed forces.*

forces, and economy. The most serious ethnic split is between the Arab majority and the Kurds, who have been in a state of rebellion—punctuated by occasional cease-fires and periods of nominal autonomy—for decades.

Family and class groupings also divide Iraqi society. Even in urban areas, the majority of Iraqis see loyalty more in terms of their own extended family than of any political entity.

Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war, which served as a rallying point for the regime, Saddam has increased efforts to foster a sense of Iraqi nationalism. At the center of the campaign is the President himself. His cult of personality—begun before the war—presents him as the personification of the regime and as the focal point of Iraqi nationalism. Billboards and posters throughout Iraq feature Saddam, bigger than life,

in various settings. Major state projects, including Baghdad's airport, a dam, a university, a railroad, and an oilfield bear his name. Iraq's Ministry of Culture and Information, the regime's propaganda machine, continuously credits Saddam with defeating Iran. It also portrays him as a great hero of the Arab world and lauds him for opposing Western imperialism and the United States. [REDACTED]

The regime looks to Iraq's past as well as to modern advancements to cultivate nationalism. The regime spotlights the country's Mesopotamian history. National celebrations routinely extol the glories of the Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian empires. In such celebrations Saddam is portrayed as the successor to Sumerian lawgiver Hammurabi, the Akkadian empire builder Sargon, and Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar. Saddam has lauded and erected statues to heroes of Iraqi nationalism and independence, including Rashid 'Ali, who staged an anti-British coup in May 1941, and even to the British-supported King Faysal I—formerly scorned by the Ba'thists as an embarrassing reminder of Western colonialism, but now honored for his Pan-Arabism and his role in establishing Iraqi independence. [REDACTED]

#### Structure of the Government

Party and government structures overlap in Iraq, with many of the same people holding the top posts in each. At the top of the government is the president, who is elected to an eight-year, renewable term of office. He has broad powers to issue laws, appoint the prime minister, vice presidents, the cabinet, and half the 50-member advisory Shura Council, as well as to dissolve the National Assembly or the Shura Council, Iraq's two quasi-legislative bodies. The president is the commander in chief of the armed forces and heads the Ba'th Party, Iraq's only significant political party, which he rules through the Regional Command, a Soviet-style presidium. [REDACTED]

During 1968-90 the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) exercised legislative and executive power by decree. Under the 1970 Constitution it was charged with electing the president, appointing the cabinet, establishing the country's highest judicial bodies,

supervising the government's administration, and ratifying laws and treaties. In practice, however, RCC decisions are reflections of Saddam's wishes. The 1990 constitution—not yet officially promulgated—would disband the RCC and divide its powers between the president and the legislature. Under the 1990 constitution, supreme legislative and executive authority in Iraq would reside in the presidency. [REDACTED]

Under this constitution the president theoretically would share power with the Shura Council and the National Assembly. The legislature would approve draft laws and issue decrees on matters of generally less importance than those handled by the president. The primary function of the cabinet would be to implement the president's policies. The constitution would provide for one or several vice presidents, who would have mostly nonpolicymaking duties. In keeping with the terms of the 1970 Constitution, an Iraqi Kurd has traditionally held the office. [REDACTED]

*The National Assembly.* Although the National Assembly, Iraq's formal legislative body, gives an appearance of shared authority, the regime tightly controls its activities and the selection of candidates. Iraq's first 250-member National Assembly was elected in September 1980. Assembly elections are held every four years, and all Iraqis over 18 years of age are eligible to vote. The Assembly meets semiannually—April-May and November-December. In principle it is authorized to propose and enact laws, ratify the state budget and international treaties, debate policy, and supervise government departments, state-run companies, and cabinet members. In practice, however, the Assembly functions as a rubberstamp for the prerogatives of the President. For example, although the Assembly conducted extensive investigations of the Ministry of Health in 1988, which resulted in the dismissal of the Health Minister and 22 of his senior officials for incompetence and negligence, [REDACTED] the investigations were conducted at the behest of the regime. The move served the regime's goal of purging corrupt officials while giving the appearance of a division of governmental powers. [REDACTED]

## The Cultural Conditioning of Iraqis

The Iraqis, like other nationalities, exhibit traits that reflect deeply imbedded cultural values and help explain how their leaders perceive the world. Valid or invalid, perceptions of these traits help shape how other countries view and deal with the Iraqis. [REDACTED]

Arab and Western observers are nearly unanimous in their view that Iraqis are different from other Arabs. The Arabs employ a term to describe one aspect of the Iraqi character—*tabaghdada*. An Arabic-English dictionary defines this as to swagger, to throw one's weight around, be fresh, or, more properly, to behave like someone from Baghdad. A business guidebook to the Middle East warns that "within the Arab world Iraqis have always had the reputation of being more insular, suspicious, and more violent than other Arabs." [REDACTED]

Various reasons are given for these traits. Ancient Mesopotamia and the territory that is now modern Iraq have been throughout their history an open highway for invasion by conquerors—from Alexander the Great to the Mongols. Baghdad was the seat of one of the early caliphates, but, as the Arab empire spread westward, its location on the periphery of the Arab world exposed it to considerable Persian influence. Moreover, the Iraqis lack a national ethnic identity. They are more heterogeneous than the populations of most Arab countries, with 60 percent of the population Shi'a Arab, 17-percent Sunni Arab, 20-percent Sunni Kurd, and 3-percent Christian and other ethnic groups. Some scholars of the Middle East attribute the Iraqi national character to the unpredictable—and sometimes destructive—nature of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. All the explanations may have some validity, but the strongest factor contributing to Iraqis' uniqueness is probably their intense dislike for the Persians and the fear of Iranian culture. [REDACTED]

Iraqis are generally regarded as:

- Self-Confident and Proud. Iraqis approach other Arab nations—even the West and the Soviet Union—confident of their strength, position, and abilities. They like to project an image of toughness. They have a strong pride in their unique

Mesopotamian and Islamic heritage. They disparage the claims of their historical rivals, Cairo and Damascus, to regional leadership. This feeling of superiority is often reflected in arrogant behavior; Soviet officials have complained repeatedly about such behavior toward the USSR. [REDACTED]

- Direct. Iraqis, unlike many Arabs, are not afraid to let others know where they stand. They tend to say "no" in situations in which many other Arabs would equivocate or even respond with a "yes" that at best means "perhaps." Iraqis take pride in their frankness and have a well-earned reputation for hard bargaining. [REDACTED]
- Stubborn. Iraqis tend to see issues in stark terms and often assume they have the higher moral ground in discussions with foreigners. A US diplomat described them as loath to change their opinion even if they possess new and contrary information. [REDACTED]
- Suspicious. Although this is not a uniquely Iraqi characteristic in the Middle East, Iraqis have a particularly strong penchant for imagining a conspiracy behind nearly every regional and domestic political development. [REDACTED]
- Brutal. This is probably their most widely recognized trait. Modern Iraqi history is littered with bloody coups, countercoups, and attacks against ethnic minorities. Baghdad's use of chemical weapons against its own Kurdish population, its forced exile of thousands of Kurdish and Iranian-origin Shi'a villagers, [REDACTED]
- Persistent. Once embarked on a goal, Iraqis tend to pursue it with bulldog tenacity. If, for example, efforts to acquire embargoed arms, chemical precursor agents, advanced weapons, or nuclear technology are blocked, they turn to gray and black markets, blackmail, and cover companies. [REDACTED]

Since the end of the Iran-Iraq war the government has narrowed the qualifications for candidates for the Assembly to prevent a coalescing of opposition to Saddam. Candidates for the Assembly must be—among other things—at least 25 years old; literate; a military veteran or legally exempt from service, and must not have had property confiscated under the Ba'thist's land reform and nationalization laws. Besides being born in Iraq of an Iraqi father, a candidate's mother must also be of nonforeign blood or be an Arab residing in an Arab country. A candidate must profess belief in Ba'thist principles and must have made a contribution to the war effort. Election supervision committees enable the government and the party to closely monitor the electoral process and vet candidates for their loyalty to Saddam. They eliminate from consideration many Kurds, Shi'as (especially those of Iranian descent), and even loyal Ba'thists with dissenting views. A telling example of the regime's quest for ever tighter control of the Assembly was the election of Sa'di Mahdi Salih—a Sunni member of the Ba'th Party Regional Command from Saddam's hometown of Tikrit—as Speaker of the 1989 Assembly.

**The Shura Council.** In addition to the National Assembly, Iraq has a small advisory body known as the Shura Council; unlike the Assembly, it does not draft laws. Its primary function is to consult with the President on key political, economic, legal, and security issues. According to the 1990 constitution, the 50 council members—25 appointed by the President and 25 publicly elected—serve five-year terms. In principle, the Council also approves laws and monitors various ministries. Like the National Assembly, however, the Council acts primarily as a rubberstamp for the President.

The new constitution of 1990 appeared on the verge of being implemented when Saddam invaded Kuwait and halted any movement toward political reform. When and if the constitution is formally promulgated, it would replace the provisional one that has been in force since the 1968 Ba'thist coup but would not significantly alter the way Iraq is governed. Nevertheless, Baghdad has touted it as an important move toward democratization. The new document provides

for greater freedom of the press, judicial independence, and formation of new political parties. It purportedly would guarantee universal suffrage and eventual presidential elections. It supposedly would also safeguard individual rights, including peaceful free assembly, protection from illegal search or entry, and the innocence of a defendant until proved guilty. For the most part, however, the new constitution is a legal fiction that, even if adopted, will do nothing to limit Saddam's power.

Such reforms, moreover, are not likely to reduce the power of the ruling elite. Saddam and his fellow Tikritis will continue to ensure the fealty of the Assembly, the judiciary, the media, and other instruments of government. The constitution would continue to limit the activities and membership of political parties and to give the president broad authority to suspend individual freedoms under the guise of protecting national security.

#### **The Ba'th Party**

Although the role of the Arab Socialist Resurrection (Ba'th) Party in Iraqi politics and decisionmaking has declined significantly under Saddam Husayn, its ideology and apparatus are fundamental for legitimizing the regime's exercise of power. The party serves as a means to vet future Iraqi leaders for loyalty and to check the political pulse of the nation. It is a secular political party, organized in 1943 by two Syrians, Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar. The Ba'th Party split in 1966, when a leftwing military faction seized power in Syria and forced moderate civilian Ba'th elements to move to Beirut, where they stayed until the Ba'th Party seized power in Baghdad in July 1968. The Ba'th Party of Iraq has dominated politics in Iraq since then. Although the rival Iraqi and Syrian groups espouse similar philosophies of Arab nationalism and socialism, they remain enemies.

The ideology of the Ba'th Party is embodied in its motto "Unity, Freedom, Socialism." Ba'thists are essentially secular Arab nationalists committed to the eventual unity of the Arab world and freedom from

foreign, especially Western, control. They also support state control of the economy, particularly of large industries, to prevent accumulation of large private fortunes. During the last several years, however, the regime has diluted these tenets by encouraging private-sector involvement and by reducing the government's role in the economy, especially in the agricultural, light industry, and service sectors, by admitting non-Arabs into party ranks, and by focusing on Iraqi national rather than Pan-Arab issues. [REDACTED]

The Ba'th Party has a highly compartmentalized, pyramidal structure, similar to a classic Communist system. The cell, composed of three to seven individuals, is the basic unit. Two to seven cells make up a division; two to five divisions a section; two sections, a branch; and a number of branches, a "region" or country, which is directed by a Regional Command, in which each branch is directly represented. Overarching the Regional Command is the National Command, which includes the party's representatives from all Arab countries.<sup>1</sup> The party's emphasis on compartmentalization, discipline, and secrecy stems from its long history of clandestine activity. Recruitment and indoctrination are carefully controlled. Candidates remain on probation for five to eight years before being accepted as full members. [REDACTED]

#### The Security Services

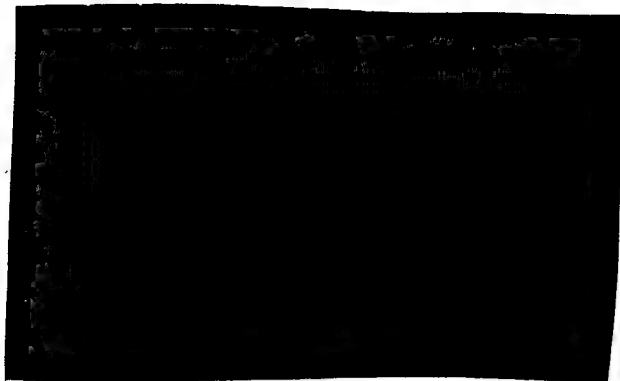
Iraq's security services play a critical role in preserving Saddam's control and in implementing his policies. Saddam, through a few close relatives and trusted supporters from the Tikriti area, directly controls Iraq's security services. He does not hesitate to purge disloyal officials and encourages different agencies to monitor each other. The services, which pervade every area of Iraqi society and government, are employed by Saddam to intimidate or eliminate rivals and cow the public. [REDACTED]

The security services perpetrate many of Iraq's human rights violations and contribute to an overall human rights record that in early 1990—even before the invasion of Kuwait [REDACTED]

<sup>1</sup> Most Ba'th Party activity outside of Iraq is confined to Syria, where the party originated. Iraq has had some success in implanting a legal, pro-Baghdad Ba'th Party in Lebanon and small—mostly illegal—cells in the West Bank, Jordan, Sudan, Tunisia, and both parts of united Yemen. [REDACTED]

characterized as "abysmal." As guarantors of Saddam's tight hold on power, the services have far-reaching and extralegal powers of investigation, detention, interrogation, torture, and execution. [REDACTED]

*The Iraqi Intelligence Service.* The IIS (Jihaz al-Mukhabarat al-Iraqi) commonly called the Mukhabarat (civilian intelligence) is headed by Saddam's half brother Sab'awi Ibrahim al-Tikriti, who has been overseeing Iraq's pacification activities in occupied Kuwait since mid-August 1990. The IIS has its roots in the Public Relations Bureau, the Ba'th Party's security organ that Saddam Husayn formed and headed in 1968. The IIS reached the peak of its power in the early 1980s under the directorship of Barzan al-Tikriti, Sab'awi's full brother. Saddam dismissed Barzan and Sab'awi, then one of Barzan's deputies, from the IIS in 1983, probably because he suspected they were using their positions to build a political power base. Sab'awi was reinstated in 1989. [REDACTED]

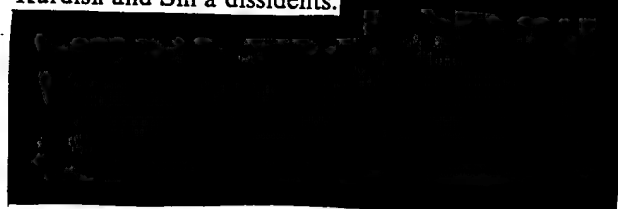


**Directorate General of Security.** The DGS is responsible for internal security. Its chief, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Duri, is nominally accountable to the Ministry of the Interior, but he reports directly to the President's Office.



**Directorate of Military Intelligence.** The DMI, the intelligence branch of the Army, has grown in size and importance over the last decade because of the war with Iran. A prime function of the DMI is to closely monitor the loyalty of the military. It also assesses the military capabilities of Iran, Israel, Turkey, and neighboring Arab states.

It fulfills general security functions inside and outside the country and cooperates with the IIS and DGS in counterinsurgency and surveillance against Kurdish and Shi'a dissidents.



### **Saddam Husayn and the Men Around Him**

As President, Chairman of the RCC, Commander of the armed forces, and secretary general of the Ba'th Party, Saddam Husayn makes all key policy decisions in Iraq. His sense of mission—to unite the Arab world

and ultimately lead it to parity with the West—combined with his characteristically suspicious view of the world fuels much of his political behavior. He is a rational, calculating decisionmaker. Nevertheless, Saddam is a risk taker, and his xenophobic world view colors his judgment—factors that raise his chances of miscalculating. Over the past decade, we have found his leadership style to be characterized by several behavioral patterns, including:

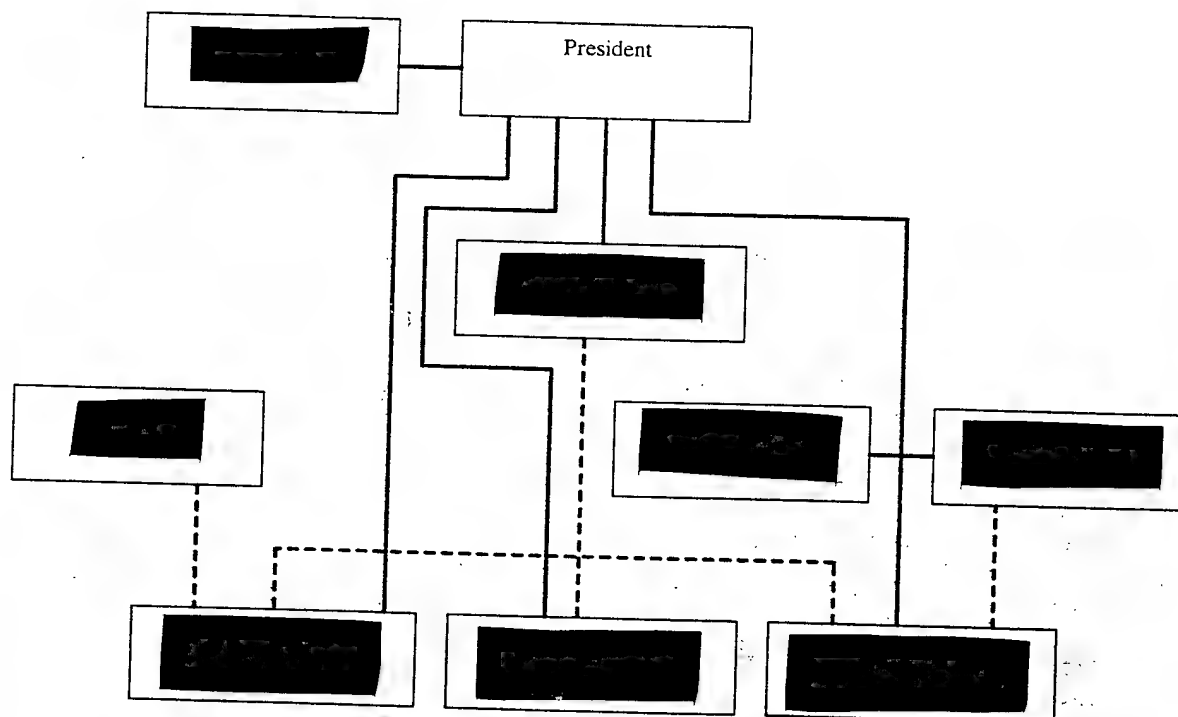
- An unswerving commitment to his vision, along with an ability to rebound with vigor from temporary setbacks as he did early in the war with Iran after significant losses, which included Iran's seizure of Al Faw and other Iraqi territory.
- A respect for strength, accompanied by a cold-blooded willingness to use any means necessary—including torture, mass murder, or assassination—to achieve his objectives and intimidate any resistance.
- The flexibility to make tactical retreats when confronted with overwhelming odds.

Saddam has survived for four decades in Iraq's volatile, "survival of the fittest" political culture, where the cost of bad judgments is often death. His experiences, particularly his danger-filled, underground existence during much of the 1950s and 1960s, have contributed to his self-reliance and wariness of others. Saddam periodically purges and reorganizes the civilian and military leadership to prevent potential rivals from developing independent bases of support. He also skillfully balances power within his family. In 1983 he removed his half brothers from control of the security services and replaced them with cousins from a different branch of the family, in part because his half brothers were trying to build power bases. Their reinstatement in 1989 to positions of authority reflects, in part, Saddam's ongoing efforts to manage rivalries within his clan and to preserve his personal hold on power.

*Saddam's perspective is parochial and xenophobic.* He views the world primarily through military and political lenses. His speeches—and, we believe, much of his thinking—are dominated by themes of nationalism, Arab solidarity, anti-imperialism, and a nostalgia

**Figure 3**  
**Iraq's Intelligence Services:**  
**Restructured Reporting Responsibilities**

----- Reporting structure before September 1988  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Reporting structure since September 1988



for Arab "lost glory." Saddam harbors anger and contempt for what he views as the vestiges of 19th-century Western colonialism in the Arab world. (S NF)

*Saddam is willing to inflict sacrifices on his people that would not be tolerated by Western societies.* He has emphatically stated for more than a decade that Iraqis and Arabs must be willing to suffer if Palestine is to be regained and parity with the West achieved.

*Saddam is hard to deal with.* He views the world as threatening and undependable and tends to suspect others with whom he interacts of having ulterior motives or of working against him. He distrusts subordinates and colleagues, does not seek their advice (or intimidates them from offering it), and generally relies on his intuition and savvy. He is ruthless and is unconcerned about world public opinion unless it is backed up with force that he believes will be used.



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**Saddam's Personality Cult: "Saddam is Iraq  
and Iraq is Saddam"**

Since becoming President in 1979, Saddam Husayn has used state propaganda organs to cultivate an elaborate personality cult that presents him as the personification of the state. His strategic miscalculation in starting the unpopular eight-year war with Iran only heightened his need to convince the population that the nation's survival depended on his leadership. He crafts his image by controlling all means of communication and orchestrating an unremitting deluge of radio, television, and press reports that praise his achievements, both real and contrived, and laud the advances made by Iraq during his tenure. Tributes to Saddam are virtually omnipresent in Baghdad:

- Walls and billboards carry slogans such as "Saddam Husayn, God's Gift to Iraq and the Arab Nation."
- Adulatory songs about Saddam are a standard on Iraqi television and in any nightclub.
- Iraqis sport T-shirts and watches that carry his image.
- Marchers at regime-staged ceremonies chant paeans such as, "Our souls, our blood, we sacrifice for you Saddam." [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Saddam is reviving a consciousness of Iraq's historical greatness and linking himself to it:

- Saddam's extravagant 53rd birthday celebration at his hometown of Tikrit included banners with slogans such as "Your candles Saddam are the torches for all Arabs," a tableau that showed three ancient kings—Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar, and Harun al-Rashid—and shepherds worshipping Saddam, and a scene that depicted baby Saddam rocking in a cradle in Iraq's southern marshes, paralleling the famous birth narrative of the ancient Akkadian emperor Sargon.



- *Portraits of Saddam at the 1988 Babylon festival depicted the President alongside Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon during the sixth century B.C. The caption was a poem in which Nebuchadnezzar assured his Iraqi children that "the most wise, the most powerful, the most successful, and the most handsome of the people between the two rivers is your master, Saddam Husayn."*
- *The President has allocated \$25 million of Iraq's scarce financial revenues to rebuild the ancient city of Babylon and has ordered that special attention be given to the upkeep of all royal tombs.*
- *Saddam, like ancient Mesopotamian kings, has had his name inscribed on bricks used in the reconstruction of Iraqi archeological sites, including Babylon and Hatra*

*Saddam is rumored to have concocted a bogus family tree showing himself as a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad and to have placed the document in a shrine at Karbala.*

*Saddam respects only strength.* He rules by terror and intimidation and will avoid any activity or negotiation if, in his view, it would make him appear weak or cowardly. His proclivity is to view himself as a victim and his aggression against others as self-defense.

*Saddam behaves unreasonably by Western norms.* He is rational in the sense that his values and actions are logical, consistent, and consonant with Iraqi political culture.

*Saddam is tenaciously committed to his long-term objective of dominating the Arab world.*

Saddam was born on 28 April 1937 in the village of Tikrit. He holds a degree from the Baghdad College of Law (1970). He appears to understand English but does not use it in meetings with Westerners. He is married and has five children.

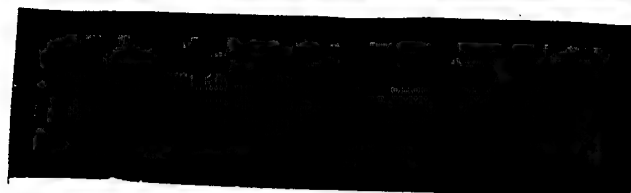
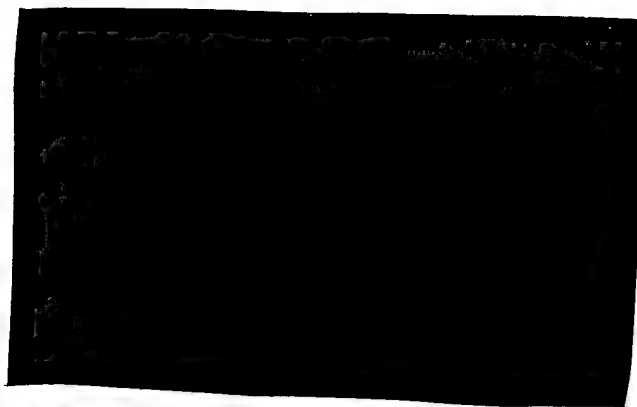
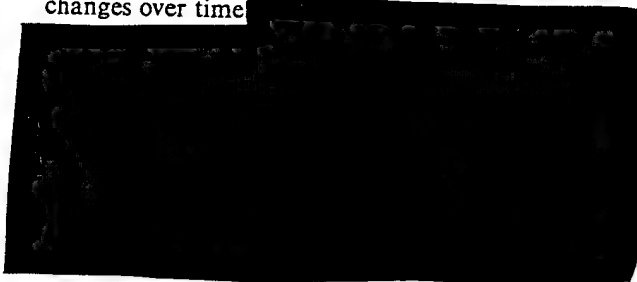
#### Saddam's Inner Circle

The members of Saddam's inner circle share and reinforce his anti-Western stand and parochial world view, and they ruthlessly implement his policies.



Figure 4. Billboard of Saddam and one of his role models, Nebuchadnezzar

Decisions flow from the center, and even members of the inner circle appear to have only marginal influence on Saddam's thinking. To the extent that they do, it is probably through the selective filtering or presentation of information rather than by providing advice or alternative views. Saddam's inner circle changes over time



Pages: 15

Exemptions: (b)(1), (b)(3)

#### Saddam's Outer Circle

Saddam's second tier includes old-line party bureaucrats and loyalists who serve in senior government positions but who have no real role in decisionmaking. They are among the few survivors of the power struggles of the 1970s and owe their survival to their inability to build a power base. They are unlikely to be taken into Saddam's confidence; they act largely as message bearers. [REDACTED]

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Exemptions: (b)(1), (b)(3)

### Key Military Commanders

Saddam makes military decisions largely on the basis of experience and intuition. He appears to rely on a handful of officers to implement his orders and to ensure the loyalty of the rest of the military. Saddam's appointment of Sa'di Tuma al-Jabburi (a Shi'a) on 12 December 1990 as Defense Minister, and his appointment of Husayn Rashid al-Muhammad (a Tikriti) on 8 November 1990 as Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, indicate that he is filling key positions with battle-tested men chosen for their competence. Both men are among Iraq's most capable and experienced military commanders. They replaced the kind of senior officers that Saddam is comfortable with in peacetime—politically loyal but not especially competent—although, as he learned at very high cost during the war with Iran, they were not the military leaders he needed to win battles. We judge that neither appointment indicates, or is in reaction to, dissension in the senior ranks of the military over the invasion of Kuwait. [REDACTED]

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Exemptions: (b)(1), (b)(3)



## Key Players in IRAQ

President Saddam Husayn maintains his tight hold on power through a small circle of relatives, trusted loyalists drawn largely from his hometown of Tikrit, and his pervasive security services. He has decreased the power of the Ba'ath Party and the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), ostensibly the country's highest ruling body, and has increasingly assumed more power himself.

Saddam's closest aides have access to the President and make public appearances with him. These aides, most of whom are also from Tikrit or who share family ties to Saddam, have important or sensitive positions; many have been characterized as sycophants and thugs. A second tier of aides (with significantly less influence) includes

Officials in both the inner circle and the second tier generally reinforce Saddam's anti-Western stand and parochial world view; they are ruthless in implementing his policies. Decisions flow from the center, and even members of the inner circle have only marginal influence on Saddam's thinking. Membership in both groups of aides appears to be fluid; depending on political circumstances—such as the Persian Gulf crisis—his lieutenants gain or lose access.

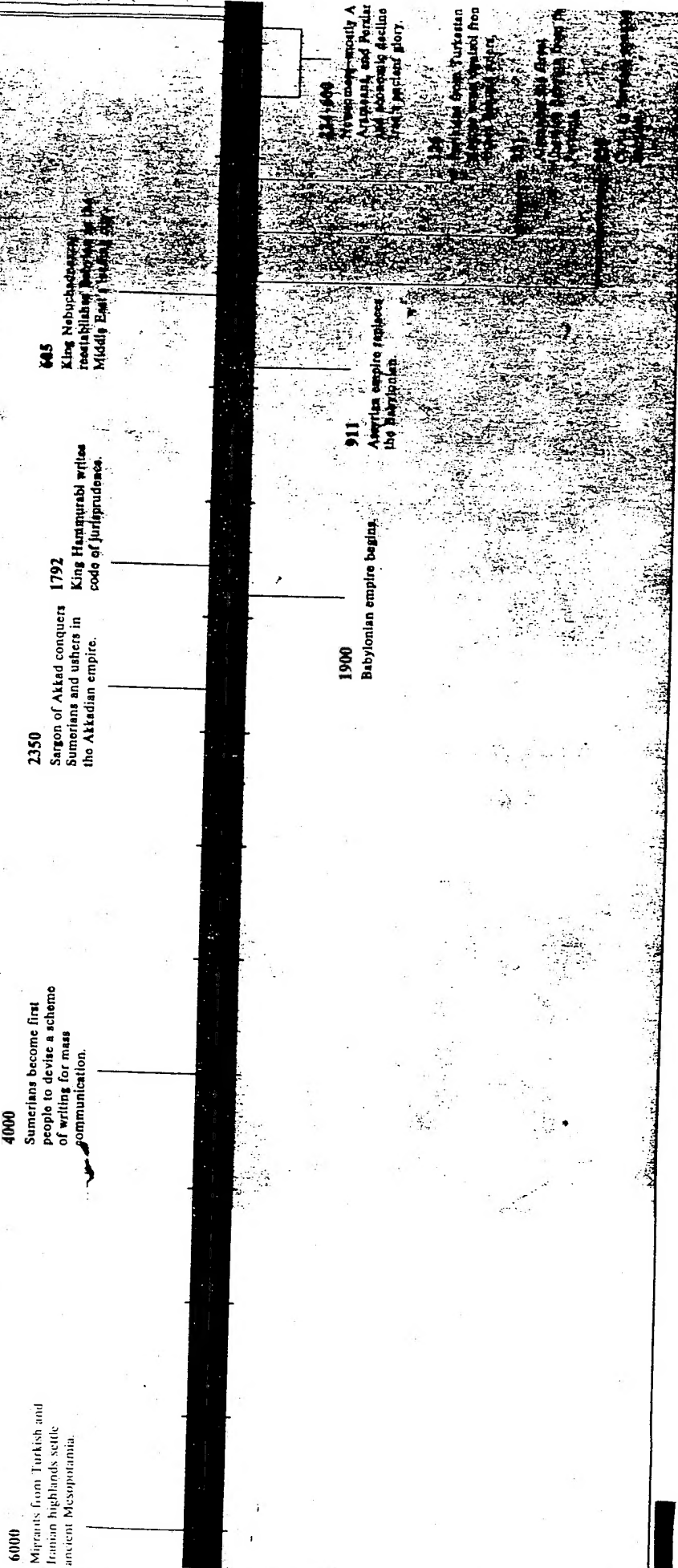


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# IRAQ:

## Historical Timeline



632	Isaac's Prophet Muhammad dies.	1914	British forces land at Al Faw and quickly move to Al Basrah.
634	Muslim army led by Khalid ibn al-Walid brings Islam to Iraq.	1917	British capture Baghdad.
661	'Ali, a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, is martyred, beginning Islam's Sunni-Shi'a split.	1920	Anti-British Islamic groups form. Revolt against British begins in Mosul.
750	Abbasid Caliphate begins, and Baghdad eventually becomes a renowned cultural center and melting pot of Arab and Persian traditions.	1921	During the Cairo Conference, British designate Faysal I—a Hashemite—as Iraq's first king.
		1932	Iraq becomes independent state and joins the League of Nations.
		1943	Iraq enters World War II on the side of the allies.
		1948	Iraq sends 10,000 troops to Palestine after creation of State of Israel.
		1958	'Abd al-Karim Qasim overthrows Hashemite monarchy and declares Iraq a republic.
		1959	Saddam Husayn attempts to assassinate Qasim.
		1963	Ba'ath Party, led by Ahmad al-Bakr and Michel Aflaq, overthrows Qasim; Ba'athists in turn overthrown later that year.
		1968	Ba'ath revolution. Saddam asserts himself as the power behind Bakr.
		1979	Bakr resigns. Saddam becomes President.
		1980	Saddam launches attack against Iran.
		1988	Cease-fire declared.
		1990	Iraqi forces attack and overrun Kuwait. Saddam announces that Kuwait will become 19th Iraqi province.

1258  
Mongol conqueror Hulagu Khan—grandson of Chinggis—seizes Baghdad and executes last Abbasid leader.

1534  
Ottoman Turks conquer Iraq.